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S E C R E T ABU DHABI 00721

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ACTION: AMB

INFO: POL ECON DCM

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INFO RUEHZM/GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL COLLECTIVE

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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 000721

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NSC FOR PATRICK HEFFERNAN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/15/2015

TAGS: IR IZ PTER SA TC

SUBJECT: WHITE HOUSE HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISOR FRAN
TOWNSEND'S MEETING WITH ABU DHABI CROWN PRINCE

Classified By: (U) Classified by Ambassador Michele J. Sison, reasons 1
.4 (b) and (d).

¶11. (C) Summary: White House Homeland Security Advisor Fran Townsend met with Abu Dhabi Crown Prince and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MbZ) February 7 to discuss counter terrorism trends in the Gulf region, U.S.-UAE CT cooperation, and the threat of Muslim extremism. Townsend and MbZ agreed on the need to enhance CT communication among GCC members. Both expressed concern about the potential for another terror attack on the scale of 9/11. While the UAE has undertaken to secure its borders and stem Islamic extremism by reforming its educational curriculum, MbZ emphasized that more needs to be done. He welcomed CT cooperation from the United States. Hizbollah continues to pose a grave threat, Townsend stressed. MbZ agreed that there was room for diplomatic approaches to Iran and Syria, Hizbollah's principal supporters. MbZ expressed sorrow over the loss of American life in Iraq, but counseled against a premature withdrawal of forces. End Summary.

¶12. (U) On February 7, White House Homeland Security Advisor Fran Townsend met with MbZ over dinner. Others attending the meeting were Interior Minister Sheikh Saif bin Zayed (MbZ's half-brother); senior representatives of the Directorate for Military Intelligence, UAE Special Forces, and State Security Directorate; MbZ aide Yousef Al Otaiba; Ambassador; Assistant Secretary of State for Economic and Business Affairs Tony

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Wayne; NSC and S/CT staffers; and Embassy representatives.

CT Cooperation and Threat Assessment

¶13. (C) Townsend provided a readout of her participation at the February 5-8 International Counterterrorism Conference in Riyadh. She said that the lack of communication between GCC states on CT matters poses a major obstacle. It seemed it was often easier for a GCC state to pass CT information to a fellow GCC state via the United States than to do so directly, she noted. MbZ said Arab League Secretary General Amr Moussa,s proposal to locate an international counter terrorism center in Egypt or Saudi Arabia would &kill8 the idea because Egypt would dominate the process and stifle the dialogue. MbZ noted he would favor placing a CT center in a smaller Middle Eastern country, similar to NATO,s decision to locate its headquarters in Brussels. Townsend indicated that Bahrain was offering to host the center and MBZ agreed that would be positive.

¶14. (C) MbZ and Townsend agreed that U.S.-UAE CT cooperation was on a sound footing. &Helping you is helping us,⁸ MbZ said. &We must stop terrorists or the UAE will be destroyed.⁸ In this context, Townsend raised with Interior Minister Saif the importance of cooperation on the Saeed export control investigation. She stressed the value of U.S. access to additional data which the UAE has accumulated on other cases. MbZ said future challenges loom, and the fight will be very different in five years. He predicted that a bigger 9/11 incident was on the horizon and raised the possibility that Iran could send a terrorist with WMD as a way to respond to pressure on Tehran. &We need to act now against a potential biological or nuclear terror attack.⁸ Townsend concurred with MbZ,s assessment. MbZ also voiced his belief that extremist groups already had access to WMD.

The Hezbollah Threat and Iran

¶15. (C) Townsend expressed the view that Hezbollah remained a grave threat and, although the Hezbollah has not conducted attacks against U.S. targets recently, prior to 9-11 they had been responsible for more American deaths than al-Qaida and they likely would conduct more in the future. Hezbollah and Iran were destabilizing forces in the region. MbZ concurred with Townsend,s assessment of the threat presented by Hezbollah, and noted that about five years ago UAE authorities had identified and neutralized a Hezbollah presence in the UAE. Townsend stated that Iran must stop sponsoring terrorism, and that the international community must stand up and declare that it will not tolerate Iran,s nuclear proliferation nor its sponsorship of terrorism. She affirmed that the U.S. is committed to a diplomatic solution vis--vis Iran, but GCC leaders must speak out publicly and not apply only diplomatic pressure on Iran while relying solely on the U.S. to provide public pressure.

Iraq in the Aftermath of the Election

¶16. (C) MbZ opined that it would have been better for Iraq,s Sunnis to have involved themselves in the recent election and cooperated with the U.S. rather than be ruled by the Shi,a. Iraq,s Sunnis showed they were &stubborn and stupid,⁸ he said. In the meantime, Iran &stood by calmly⁸ to take advantage of the situation. MbZ labeled the Iranians as &sneaky.⁸ MbZ asked how the USG evaluated Syria. Syria could do more to cooperate with the U.S., Townsend said. She agreed that the U.S. might have an opportunity to persuade the Syrians to change course. MbZ said the U.S. needed to send a signal to Syria &that Syria,s generals would understand.⁸ MBZ counseled that the U.S. should not put Syria and Iran in the same category and that the U.S. should work to bring Syria to cooperate on CT, thereby forcing them away from an alliance with Iran.

¶17. (S) On the question of how Coalition forces treat captured insurgents in Iraq, MbZ said there was obviously a difference in approach in the West from that of the Arab world, signaling that he would sacrifice international law and human rights considerations in the interest of security. If it were it up to him, these insurgents would be treated in such

a way as to deter others from taking part in the insurgency.

¶18. (C) MbZ expressed sorrow for the losses the U.S. had suffered in Iraq. &There are no words to explain our thanks to them and their families.⁸ That said, MbZ was convinced that U.S. troops should not withdraw from the region, &or all hell will break loose.⁸ He wished the UAE,s neighbors understood this. &This is deadly serious business.⁸ (In a sidebar conversation, Ambassador asked MbZ about PM Iyad Allawi,s February 3-6 visit to the UAE. The trip had been kept out of the media,s eye for security reasons, MbZ said. MbZ told Ambassador he had warned Allawi that it was likely to be a &bloody⁸ next four for five months. The UAE wished to see Allawi as Prime Minister once again, MbZ confided, but &nobody⁸ was supporting him. Allawi had done much to build up the new Iraqi army, police, and security services, MbZ said, but needed help.)

Gulf security

¶19. (S) Townsend and MbZ reviewed trends in terrorism and security in the Gulf region, and Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, and Kuwait in particular. Turning to his Special Operations group commander, MbZ noted that the UAE had some 250 men in Afghanistan alongside Coalition forces. Why was this, he asked rhetorically? It was because two of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers were Emirati nationals. Fighting Al Qaida on the ground was something the UAE had no choice but to do. However, &another⁸ Gulf country (Saudi Arabia) counted 15 of its nationals among the 9/11 hijackers, but &had had a different reaction.⁸ MbZ noted that the Saudis would have to win the war of extremism upon their own soil for the UAE, the Gulf, and the world to be free from terror. Townsend noted that the Saudis have acknowledged that they have a long-term problem and have thus entered into a new phase in the fight against terrorism. MbZ then asserted that Bahrain and Kuwait were in denial about the depth of their respective terrorism problems. MbZ said the "Arabs" have to play a bigger role in countering extremism and terrorism but lamented the near term likelihood of common action.

Border Controls

¶110. (C) Townsend described post-September 11 efforts to improve U.S. border controls and to achieve a better balance between security and immigration, and she acknowledged that the current situation has often discouraged many people from coming to the U.S. MbZ described the UAE,s own border control challenges. He admitted it is still easy to smuggle explosives into the UAE by land or sea. He said he would be more comfortable with the security situation once enhanced border security measures had been put in place by end 2005.

Stemming Extremism

¶111. (C) In addition to tougher border control measures, MbZ talked at length about his government,s efforts to stem Muslim extremism, particularly via reforms the schools. To effectively combat extremism, MbZ said, the educational curriculum must not only address the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic, but also improve students, and teachers, knowledge of Islam. Misinterpretation of the Koran is one reason why some extremists regard anyone who does not adhere to their narrow worldview as non-Muslim. To illustrate his point, MbZ described how UAE Special Forces on patrol in Afghanistan heard villagers (influenced by the Taliban) asserting that the Emirati soldiers were &non-Muslims⁸ because their version of Islam and their practices differed from their own.

Atmospherics

¶112. (C) The dinner, which was outdoors at a casual Abu Dhabi seafood restaurant, was informal and laid-back, with other patrons seated nearby and minimal security. The conversation

was free-flowing, and it was apparent that MBZ felt very comfortable and at-ease with Townsend and her delegation. While MBZ has relinquished his UAE Armed Forces Chief of Staff duties in favor of his new Crown Prince role, he continues to have an active hand in the UAE counterterror structure. He remains a key UAE CT interlocutor on both civilian and military matters.

¶13. (U) This cable has been cleared by Homeland Security Advisor Townsend and Assistant Secretary for Economic and Business Affairs Wayne.

¶14. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

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